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**31 May - 2 June, 2018
Vrnjačka Banja, Serbia**

2018

**TOURISM
IN FUNCTION OF DEVELOPMENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA**

Tourism in the Era of Digital Transformation



**THEMATIC
PROCEEDINGS**

I



**UNIVERSITY OF KRAGUJEVAC
FACULTY OF HOTEL MANAGEMENT
AND TOURISM IN VRNJAČKA BANJA**



The Third International Scientific Conference

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DEVELOPMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF
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Thematic Proceedings

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Tourism in the Era of Digital Transformation

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FOREWORD

The Faculty of Hotel Management and Tourism in Vrnjačka Banja organized the third International Scientific Conference Tourism in function of the development of the Republic of Serbia, Tourism in the Era of Digital Transformation that was held in Vrnjačka Banja from May 31st to June 2nd, 2018. For the purpose of this year's Conference, 84 scientific papers were presented by 157 participants coming from USA, Finland, Italy, Romania, Republic of Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Croatia and Serbia.

The Conference is organized in the function of exchanging ideas and experience of the participants coming from Serbia and abroad for the purpose of future tourism development, with the special emphasis given to the impact of modern technologies on tourism and prospects for the development of tourism in Serbia and other countries in the era of digital transformation.

The Thematic Proceedings, as a result of the Conference, are published in two volumes, and will be available to a wider audience, scientifically and practically focused on tourism-related multidisciplinary issues.

Publishing of Thematic Proceedings was financially supported by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia.

Vrnjačka Banja,
June, 2018

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RURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE ERA OF DIGITALIZATION: EXAMPLE OF MACEDONIA

Marija Magdincheva-Shopova¹; Tatjana Boshkov²;

Abstract

Tourism is an area that fosters economic development with great influence on other forms of tourism development. The pronounced digitization processes in all segments of the operation cause changes in the rural tourism sector. This paper focuses on influence of digitalization among the enterprises in the field of rural tourism. The research of the paper uses survey questionnaire method and it represents the perception of the representation, information and the need for digitalization in the rural tourism sector. The obtained results of the survey confirmed the basic hypotheses that digitalization has an impact on rural tourism development, as there is a strong need for information and financial support in this sector. In the conclusion, the paper offers guidelines and proposals for the development of rural tourism using the opportunities of digitization, in order to overcome the established situation.

Key Words: rural entrepreneurship, rural tourism, digitization, tourism development, information technology.

JEL classification: Z30

Introduction

The pronounced globalization processes and high degree of digitization have its influence anywhere thus including the tourism sector, too. The framework of tourism sector is around 9 million people from EU Member States, representing 6% of the total number of employees and the tourism sector accounts for 5.5% of GDP (WTO, 1998). Consequently, changes in tourism cause changes in the field of rural tourism as an alternative form

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for tourism development as well. The rural areas occupy 91% of the EU's total territory, and 56% of the total population is living there (Common Agricultural Policy, 2012). The rural areas play an important role in demographic, social and economic processes. Rural tourism is one of the areas that has the greatest potential for generating growth and employment, as an area with undiscovered potential for development. In response to this, rural tourism is being increasingly promoted, versus mass tourism in destinations (Getz, 1998). The supply side of tourism sector can contribute for development and competitiveness of the regions. Due to the potential contributing to the socio-economic progress, many EU countries have included the development of rural tourism in the development strategy agenda of regions and rural areas. The professional literature in this area does not have information on the impact of innovative ways of working, including the digitalization of the operations in the enterprises of rural tourism sector. The representation of the entrepreneurial initiative in the field of rural tourism expresses the entrepreneurs' determination to an innovative way of organizing the work and providing an appropriate tourist offer in the rural areas (Magdinceva-Sopova, Postolov & Elenov, 2017). The application of information technology in operation facilitates and accelerates the process of transmission and exchange of information. The information is shared with many recipients. The possibilities for information exchange are simply unlimited. Also, the costs of distribution are reduced and restrictions are reduced in terms of geographical distribution and distance (Shanker, 2008). Therefore, in today's conditions of operation, information and information technology are key factors for operating and planning the future of business activities. The latest research shows that more than half of people traveling pay online and use the e-sales and booking system when they have an opportunity or option for e-shopping (Henry, 2016). But the impact of digitization in the rural tourism sector is specific. On the one hand, tourists have desires arising from the need to escape of overwhelming daily commitments and dynamic developments. On the other hand, changes in the operation of the enterprises are evident as a result of the application of e-technology in the operation. Taking in consideration the fact that modern tourists are increasingly returning to nature and tradition, the development of rural tourism is associated with improving the quality of life in rural areas, promoting the activities in the agricultural and forestry sector, and increasing the care for environmental protection (Magdinceva-Sopova et al., 2017). The attraction and need to flee from the excessive degree of digitization and industrialization make people choose rural tourism more and more as a way of rest. In the rural

tourism sector, information technology is used in a variety of ways. Tourists use the information-computer technology for: searching information: by category, geography, keyword, travel planning for customers, reservations, weather transport schedules, etc. (Buhalis, 2003). The basis for a successful operation of the enterprises is the continuous introduction of new ways and forms of different activities and improvement of business processes in real. As a result, many enterprises are reluctant to alter rapidly the technical conditions and requirements of consumers through entrepreneurial behavior (Boyadzioski & Blazeska, 2009).

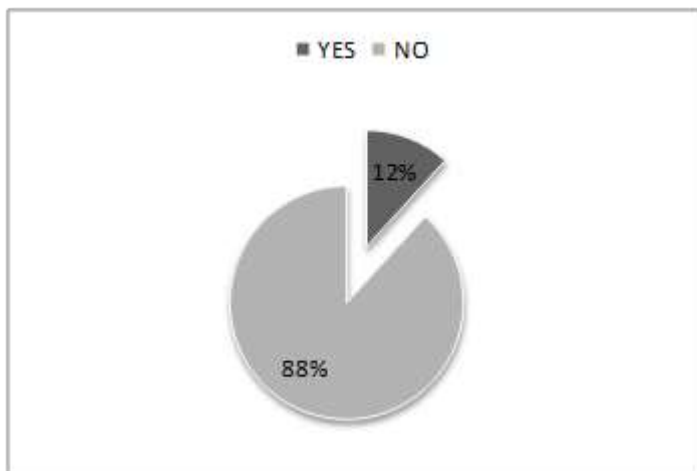
Small enterprises that apply for the concept of modern entrepreneurship provide active support for the sustainability of the economic and social aspects of environment as a key factor for competitive rural destinations, creating new jobs as well preserving natural and cultural beauties. Through the concept of rural entrepreneurship, the process of utilizing natural resources and resources and business ideas of entrepreneurs are encouraged. Working together on the future of European tourism, five basic components for tourism industry development are set up: information, employee training, quality, sustainable development and emerging technologies (WTO, 1998).

Rural tourism characteristics as an alternative form of tourism development

Rural tourism as a term is accepted by European Union and refers to all tourism activities in the rural areas. According to the OECD definition, any area locally populated with an average density of 150 people per square kilometer represents a rural area or environment. At the regional level, geographical units are grouped into three parts: a dominant rural area (15%), to a significant extent a rural area (15-50%) and dominantly urbanized areas (15%) (Methodijeski , 2017).

Since modern tourists are increasingly returning to nature and tradition, the development of rural tourism is associated with the promotion of opportunities for development of rural forms of tourism by improving the quality of life in rural areas, infrastructure improvement, improving the work of enterprises and increasing the care for the environment (Magdinceva-Sopova et al., 2017), Natural beauties, clean environment filled with lakes, mountains, waterfalls, thermal waters, ethno villages, monasteries, as well as local manifestations, traditional food and

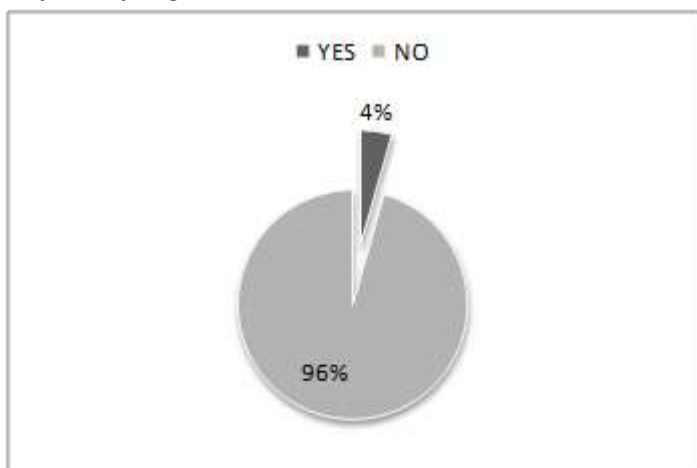
Figure 5: *Graphs display the results of the question - Are you aware of what digitalisation in the field of rural tourism is?*



Source: *Own research*

The sixth question - Are you ready to invest in the field of digitization in the rural sector?, the majority of the entrepreneurs who participated in the survey or 65 respondents are not ready and do not plan to invest in this segment of operation, only 3 respondents answered positively. The following picture shows the observations received on this issue.

Figure 6: *Graphs display the results of the question - Are you ready to invest in the field of digitization in the rural sector?*



Source: *Own research*

On the one hand, tourists are with their wishes arising from the need to escape from the overwhelming daily obligations and dynamic developments. On the other hand, changes in the operation of the enterprises themselves are evident as a result of the application of e-technology in the operation. Through the findings obtained from the research conducted in this paper as well as on the basis of theoretical review within the framework of labor, it can be concluded that the entrepreneurs working in this sector are not informed about the possibilities that digitization gives and are not ready to invest in this segment. The obtained results of the conducted research confirm the established hypothesis that digitalization has an impact on the development of rural tourism, so there is a strong need for information and financial support in this sector. In order to overcome this situation, a systematic approach for encouraging and supporting the process of introducing modern e-working methods should be applied by introducing incentive financial programs and supporting ways to promote entrepreneurship awareness. The digitization process in rural areas is useful and economically viable only if it provides promotion of rural resources and eco-systems as it implements a policy for environmental protection and sustainable natural resource management.

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